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SUBJECT: U.S.-CHINA WORKING GROUP MEETING WITH DEFENSE
MINISTER CAO GANGCHUAN

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) In a meeting with Chinese Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan, Representative Kirk outlined three proposals for U.S.-China military and space cooperation: a DOD-MND hotline, an International Space Station-compatible docking ring for China's Shenzhou spacecraft and increased transparency in China's manned spaceflight program. Cao reviewed U.S.-China cooperation and gave positive support to the space cooperation proposals but was noncommittal on a defense hotline link. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) At a cordial meeting January 10, Representatives Mark Kirk, Rick Larsen and Tom Feeney as members of the U.S.-China Working Group of the House of Representatives met with Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan at the Chinese Ministry of National Defense (MND). Cao warmly welcomed the group, noting that the delegation's itinerary would include the launch facilities for China's manned spaceflight program, which foreigners rarely see. This indicates the great importance China attaches to the visit of the Working Group.

Proposals for Enhanced Cooperation

¶3. (SBU) Representative Kirk outlined three specific proposals for improved U.S.-China relations. The first is a U.S. Defense Department-PRC Ministry of National Defense Direct Telephone Link (DTL). The two militaries seem ready for this step and the United States and China already have a presidential DTL between the White House and President Hu Jintao's office; and between the U.S. Department of State and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is important for military professionals to be able to talk to each other and complement the links between national and foreign policy leaders.

¶4. (SBU) The second proposal, Representative Kirk continued, is a docking ring for China's Shenzhou spacecraft compatible with the International Space Station (ISS) to facilitate a decision by China to participate in the Station. Additionally, the

American and Chinese people would welcome the ability of the Shenzhou spacecraft to assist with an ISS rescue mission, should the need arise.

15. (SBU) The third proposal is for increased transparency in China's manned spaceflight program. Increased transparency would build confidence between the two countries' space administrations.

16. (SBU) The Working Group hopes to see concrete progress on these issues before the visit of President Hu Jintao to the United States in April. The Working Group appreciates General Cao's help with these issues in the months ahead.

Cao: Cherish "Hard-Won" U.S.-China Cooperation

17. (SBU) Cao expressed his thanks and careful attention to the Working Group's issues. At present, U.S.-China relations are stable and have reached broad consensus on cooperation in the 21st Century. In addition to trade ties, more than one million citizens travel between the two countries annually. Bilateral cooperation includes seeking a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, U.N. reform, counterterrorism, nonproliferation and anticrime measures. The significance of U.S.-China ties has increased and good relations are a "hard-won" development to be cherished.

18. (SBU) Cao said he has thought deeply on U.S.-China issues. The world contains 189 countries and thousands of ethnic groups, cultures, traditions,

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political systems and religions. In such a diverse world, it is impossible to have identical views. Nevertheless, in U.S.-China relations the commonalities are greater than the differences.

Mil-Mil Ties and Rumsfeld's "Charisma of a Sailor"

19. (SBU) Turning to military-to-military relations, Cao took note of his 2003 visit to Washington and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's visit to Beijing in 2005. Cao characterized Rumsfeld's visit as a great success, as consensus was reached on military exchanges and increased cooperation.

110. (SBU) Cao said his discussions with Secretary Rumsfeld in October were open and frank and that he got along very well with Rumsfeld because of their closeness in age. Rumsfeld has "the charisma of a sailor" and talks about military issues "above board," with respect and understanding. China's defense modernization is part of China's economic development drive and should not be considered a threat, Cao stated. China suffered foreign invasions for more than one hundred years, so the Chinese people know from experience to "Do not to others what you do not want others to do to you."

Cao's Views on Working Group Ideas

111. (SBU) Pressed by Representative Kirk for a response to the three ideas proposed by the Working Group, Cao said that he would ask the professionals to have discussions on an ISS-compatible docking ring for the Shenzhou spacecraft. Cao supported further discussions on China's manned spaceflight program to increase transparency. He added that although past U.S.-Chinese satellite cooperation was halted by the American fear of technology transfer, he would take a

positive attitude to this proposal.

¶12. (SBU) Regarding a DTL link between the two defense establishments, Cao claimed that China's MND has never established such a link with a foreign military. Foreign military contacts are handled by the Foreign Affairs Office of the MND with the U.S. Embassy DAO office and through the Chinese Embassy in Washington. If MND were to establish a DTL with a foreign defense department, the first country for such a defense hotline would be the United States.

¶13. (SBU) Representative Kirk asked Cao to inform him of future MND delegations visiting Washington and said he would raise the DTL issue with Secretary Rumsfeld and DUSD Richard Lawless.

¶14. (U) Participants

U.S. Side

Representative Mark Kirk
Representative Rick Larsen
Representative Tom Feeney
The Ambassador
Steve Orlins, President, National Committee on U.S.-
China Relations
Richard Goldberg, U.S.-China Working Group Co-Staff
Director
Dr. Yang Hong, Bryant University
Brigadier General Ralph Jodice, Defense Attache
Lt. Col. David Dahl, Assistant Air Force Attache
Caroline Katzin, Special Assistant to the Ambassador
Embassy Control Officer
Embassy Notetaker
Interpreter

Chinese Side

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General Cao Gangchuan, Minister of National Defense
Major General Qian Lihua, MND Foreign Affairs Office
Senior Captain Li Ji, MND Foreign Affairs Office
MFA U.S. Affairs officer Li Suyun
Staff and Interpreter

¶15. (U) The Delegation has cleared this cable.
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